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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-1071](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The United Nations responded to the failure of some past peacekeeping operations by developing a strategy to help peacekeeping operations move a country from conflict to sustainable peace. It has attempted to apply this strategy to the large and costly peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, East Timor, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 2001. As a contributor of over 25 percent of the cost of U.N. operations, the United States has a stake in the successful application of this strategy. The strategy also has implications for the conduct of international peace operations in other post-conflict countries. GAO was asked to (1) identify the elements of the U.N. transition strategy; (2) assess the extent to which the United Nations has applied the strategy to operations; and (3) assess the challenges to implementing the strategy in these three countries.

U.N. PEACEKEEPING

Transition Strategies for Post-Conflict Countries Lack Results-Oriented Measures of Progress

What GAO Found

The United Nations has developed a transition strategy for its peacekeeping operations that takes a comprehensive and long-term view and focuses on the causes of the conflict. The U.N. strategy for making effective peacekeeping transitions has three elements: (1) establishing conditions for sustainable peace, (2) coordinating efforts among the United Nations and other international organizations to establish these conditions and sustain assistance after peacekeepers withdraw, and (3) developing objectives and results-oriented measures of progress to help manage and decide when a country's conditions warrant the withdrawal of peacekeepers.

U.N. Troops and Police Man a Security Checkpoint with East Timorese Police



Source: GAO.

The United Nations is attempting to apply the elements of this strategy to help Sierra Leone, East Timor, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo transition from conflict to sustainable peace, but it faces enormous challenges. Establishing security often takes longer and can be more expensive than originally planned in countries where rival factions may continue to fight. Developing participatory governance is also difficult in countries with little experience of accountable government. Coordinating with independent international organizations and donor nations with different priorities is also a challenge. The United Nations has not yet developed results-oriented measures of progress for the three peacekeeping operations.

Although the United Nations uses some indicators to manage the withdrawal of peacekeeping troops, they did not have results-oriented measures to assess the security situations in Sierra Leone and East Timor and subsequent events in each country showed that the situation was not as secure as available measures indicated. The U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations acknowledges that it needs better indicators by which to measure the progress peacekeeping operations are making in attaining sustainable peace. However, the department has not yet developed these indicators.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-1071.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Joseph A. Christoff at (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov.